

**WASHINGTON STATE CATHOLIC CONFERENCE**  
**Statewide Legislative Advocacy Project Description**  
**October 2023**

Introduction

The Washington State Catholic Conference (WSCC) seeks to work with the three Catholic Dioceses of Washington state to implement a year-round, statewide legislative, congressional and policy advocacy network. This advocacy effort intends to engage diocesan staff, parish groups and other stakeholders to support a statewide Catholic network of legislative, congressional and policy advocates raising a common voice grounded in Catholic Social Teaching.

Relationship Building

To carry out a statewide advocacy effort of this type, WSCC will work to engage staff and volunteer leadership at the diocesan level for all three dioceses. This will include direct outreach and listening to priorities within each diocese and their respective approach to legislative advocacy.

To better coordinate with dioceses, WSCC will seek to

- 1) Meet with parish leaders who are already engaged or want to be engaged with legislative or congressional advocacy, and
- 2) Seek to create a network of statewide advocacy contacts from all three dioceses that can work to create a system of information exchange and be part of a statewide network working on the common cause of policy and legislative advocacy. This could also include working within diocesan and multi-diocesan regions and deaneries. Local needs will be a priority in terms of what issues dioceses and parishes choose to advocate around. Statewide advocacy efforts will also include education on Catholic teaching regarding national and international issues, which need our Catholic voice.

**ACTION:**

- ❖ Beginning in 2024, meet individually with each WA Bishop annually to discuss priorities for their dioceses and faith formation needs for advocacy
- ❖ Establish a team of Diocesan advocacy leaders to engage their feedback and ideas on growing statewide, year-round advocacy efforts.

Forming Consciences

A goal for this work is to help establish a spiritually well-formed network of statewide advocates. WSCC will work with diocesan staff to offer training in Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship and Catholic Social Teaching to diocesan, regional and parish-based groups desiring this type of formation. Training will be fully Catholic in content and uniform across the state for dioceses and parishes. WSCC can facilitate this by using Zoom presentations, videos, social media and enlisting the help of local and statewide experts. WSCC will also seek to provide these trainings in Spanish.

## Advocacy Models

As part of advocacy formation and as requested, WSCC and our partners can provide presentations on tried and tested advocacy models such as Just Faith, Parish Social Ministry (Catholic Relief Services), Network Builders (Catholic Community Services), Faith Doing Justice (Jesuits West Province) and Voice of the Poor (St. Vincent de Paul). In addition, a local parish or diocese may use any model that adheres to Catholic teaching. Assessing advocacy models will focus on local preferences and on providing tools for effective legislative and policy advocacy. While efforts for service work may well come from some of these efforts, legislative and policy advocacy will be the focus for these statewide advocacy efforts.

## Identifying Priority Issues

Utilizing good communication to a well-formed advocacy information network, WSCC can provide timely updates on state and national legislative matters and policy items that may be of concern to local advocacy groups. Information on these matters will be provided on an ongoing and year-round basis. Working with advocacy network leaders, WSCC will encourage local groups to identify matters, issues and/or legislation that are a priority focus for local groups and assist with messaging consistent with Catholic Social Teaching. WSCC will also inform advocacy groups regarding the legislative priorities for the Catholic bishops of Washington.

## Action

A primary goal of this statewide advocacy program is that our efforts lead to consistent advocacy statewide. As part of this effort, WSCC and our Catholic stakeholders can help provide timely technical assistance to help local groups hold legislative forums, town halls, meetings with their legislators, launch letter writing campaigns and hold advocacy days. It is our intent that legislative advocacy be occurring year-round, based on local priorities whenever possible. The goal is to develop well-trained local groups that are active and engaged in a variety of legislative advocacy activities and willing and able to train others.

## WSCC Role

Through the efforts of a statewide advocacy program, WSCC seeks to work with dioceses, parishes, and other stakeholders to use the collective capacity of all stakeholders to promote a strong Catholic voice statewide. These efforts will recognize and lift up local preferences and identify and utilize advocacy methods and systems already in play and that are working well. WSCC will seek to play the roles of convener, communicator, collaborator, resource provider, sharer of best practices and will otherwise bring an effective level of communication and accountability to this effort. WSCC cannot provide all the services noted in this program description but will seek to leverage the skills, resources, and capacity of all those involved in this effort to make this program work. WSCC will also lean heavily on virtual tools to engage stakeholders and help facilitate all the activities that will help make this effort successful.